

## The Driscoll's Story

The origins of Driscoll's date back to the late 1800's when a family began growing strawberries in the California town of Watsonville. Key to early success was the use of a ribbon to brand the strawberries sold in the San Francisco market. Due to early success with proprietary varieties a decision was made in the 1950's to establish a breeding programme which resulted in a novel varieties providing for improved flavour, disease resistance, yield improvement and extended seasons.

After World War II, the original owners realised that they could produce more fruit and supply more customers by bringing in new growers and the company Driscoll's Strawberry Associates was formed. In the late 1980s' to mitigate the risk of losing market share to new competitors and in response to customer demand, Driscoll's expanded their produce range to include blueberries, raspberries and blackberries and took the bold move to provide all four berries to consumers 12 months a year. Operations extended outside of California to other USA states, Canada, Mexico and Chile through growers licensed to grow Driscoll's varieties under the Driscoll's system. Continuous variety development also played a role to stretch availability of berries in existing locations. Consumers are oblivious to the different varieties but look for the Driscoll's brand and associate that with high quality, great tasting berries – available all year round.

On the back of success of 12 months' supply in the USA, Driscoll's now grows berries in 21 countries and sells them in 48. The success of Driscoll's is built on a strong brand, innovation and more recently providing consumers with consistency high quality berries, all year round.

Former CEO of Driscoll's Kevin Murphy and current member of the Zespri Global Supply Advisory Board considers that the success of Driscoll's has many parallels with Zespri. Both are strongly connected to their grower base, have invested in and built strong brands and are reaping the rewards of innovative product development. Kevin believes that brand loyalty, supplying consistently high quality and staying constantly relevant to consumers is critical and that requires being on the shelf 12 months a year. When there is no product on the shelves, consumers move to other products that are available and switch their brand loyalty. Regaining those customers when the season restarts can be exceedingly difficult in the presence of so many other options. Kevin says that by being available to consumers all year round Driscoll's has shifted the consumer mindset of berries from a seasonal fruit to an everyday fruit that is always good – all while maintaining a premium for the growers. Driscoll's have increased the share of the fruit bowl that berries hold all for the benefit of Driscoll's growers.